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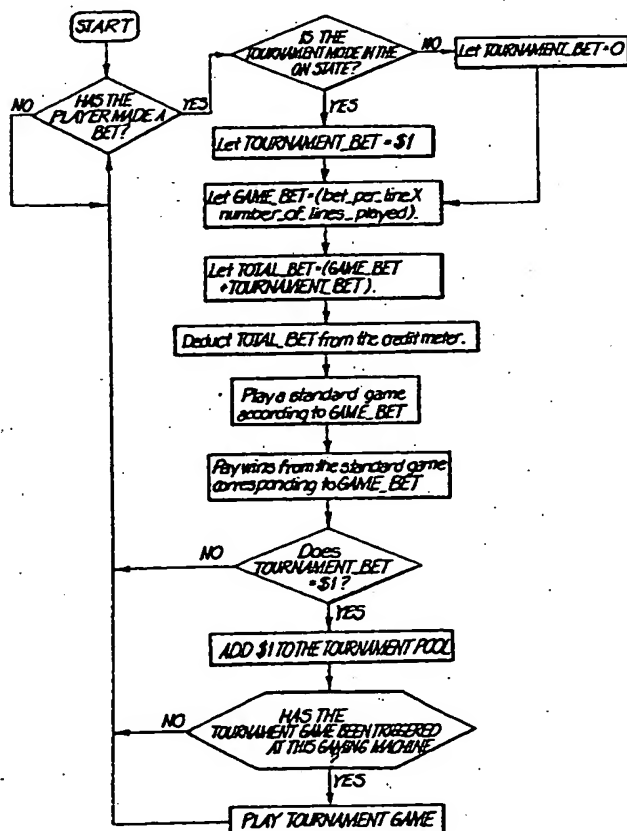
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For two-letter codes and other abbreviations, refer to the "Guid-
ance Notes on Codes and Abbreviations" appearing at the begin-
ning of each regular issue of the PCT Gazette.

(54) Title: GAMING MACHINE WITH ELIGIBILITY FOR PARTICIPATION IN FEATURES

(57) Abstract: A gaming machine includes a display for dis-
playing symbols relating to a base game. A controller, in-
cluding a processor, controls operation of the base game and,
optionally, a secondary event. A discriminator discriminates
between wagers placed on the game to determine whether the
wager is to be placed in respect of the base game or the sec-
ondary event.



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Gaming machine with eligibility for participation in features.

Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to a gaming machine of the type known as a slot machine or fruit machine. Generally, these types of machines have video simulations of rotatable reels while others are arranged to play video simulations of card games or other types of wagering games, such as bingo or keno. More particularly, the invention provides an improvement to a game played on such a machine.

Background to the Invention

The concept of linked progressive jackpots is becoming increasingly popular in the gaming industry where two or more gaming machines contribute portions of bets made on base games to a central jackpot pool. The pool is awarded to one or more of the contributing machines when a specified triggering event occurs. As players become used to these types of progressive jackpot arrangements, designers need to develop more exciting ways of marketing and awarding the jackpot prizes in order to stimulate existing audiences and attract new players.

As far as the applicant is aware, to be eligible for the reward of a progressive jackpot prize, the game requires that the maximum bet be staked. While this is by far the easiest way to increase total game turnover, which is beneficial to the venue housing the machines, players not playing the maximum bet are only eligible for fixed prizes as shown on a paytable of the machine. These fixed prizes are much lower than the progressive jackpot prizes and this places the player playing fewer bets at a relative disadvantage with respect to the game's return. To compound matters, while players playing fewer bets than the maximum bets still contribute to the jackpot prize pool, such players are ineligible to win the jackpot prize.

Summary of the Invention

According to a first aspect of the invention there is provided a gaming machine which includes:

- a display mean for displaying at least a base game;
- a control means, including a processing means, for controlling operation of at least the base game; and

a discriminating means for discriminating between wagers placed on the game to determine whether the wager is to be placed in respect of the base game or a secondary event.

5 The secondary event may be displayed on the display means of the gaming machine.. Instead, or in addition, the secondary event may be displayed on a display means remote from the gaming machine.

Also, the secondary event may be controlled by the control means of the gaming machine or it may be controlled by a central controller with which the gaming machine is in communication.

10 Hence, by means of the invention, a player can choose whether or not to participate in the secondary event or feature and, if the player desires to do so, a dedicated bet needs to be made to have access to the secondary event or feature.

15 Preferably, the gaming machine includes an allocating means for allocating an entire wager, placed in respect of the secondary event or feature, to a prize pool for the secondary event or feature. The allocating means may operate under the control of the control means. Instead, only a portion of said entire wager may be allocated to the prize pool with the remaining part of the wager accruing to the operator of the gaming machine as the operator's profit.

20 The discriminating means may be activated by an actuator. The actuator may be a selector button which, conveniently, may be incorporated in a keypad on a midtrim of the machine. In addition, or instead, the actuator may be in the form of an icon on a touch screen of the gaming machine.

25 According to a second aspect of the invention, there is provided a gaming machine system which includes:

a gaming machine comprising a display means for displaying at least a base game, a control means, including a processing means, for controlling operation of the base game, and a discriminating means for discriminating between wagers placed on the game to determine whether the wager is to be placed in respect of the base game or a secondary event; and

a dynamic prize pool associated with the gaming machine for awarding prizes for wins in respect of the secondary event, the dynamic prize pool being related to wagers placed in respect of the secondary event.

Brief Description of the Drawings

The invention is now described by way of example with reference to the accompanying drawings in which:

Figure 1 shows a three dimensional view of a gaming machine in accordance with the invention:

Figure 2 shows a block diagram of a control circuit of the gaming machine;

Figure 3 shows a button layout of a midtrim of the gaming machine of Figure 1;

Figure 4 shows a display screen with a discriminating means of the gaming machine de-activated;

Figure 5 shows a display screen with the discriminating means of the gaming machine activated;

Figures 6 and 7 show display screens of a tournament feature of the gaming machine; and

Figure 8 shows a flowchart of a game played on the gaming machine of Figure 1.

Detailed Description of the Drawings

In Figure 1, reference numeral 10 generally designates a gaming machine, including a game, in accordance with the invention. The machine 10 includes a console 12 having a video display unit 14. The video display unit 14 includes a screen 16. Video simulations of reels or reel strips 18 are simulated on the screen 16.

The machine 10 includes an actuator 20.2. The actuator 20.2 is a button of a keypad 21 arranged on a midtrim 23 of the console 12. A player playing the machine 10 operates one of each of the buttons 20.3 and 20.4 (Figure 3) to be eligible to participate in a main game or base game of the machine 10. As will be described in greater detail below, the player playing the machine 10 operates the button 20.2 to be eligible to participate in a secondary event or feature.

As illustrated, the machine 10 includes a top box 22 on which a score-card or paytable 24 is carried. The paytable 24 has two parts 24.1 and 24.2. The part 24.1 carries a paytable for the base game of the machine 10 and the part 24.2 contains progressive meters relating to the secondary event or feature.

A coin tray 26 is mounted beneath the console 12 for cash payouts from the machine 10 either as a result of a win in the base game or as a result of a win from the secondary event or feature, or both.

Referring to Figure 2 of the drawings, a control system 30 is illustrated. A program which implements the game and user interface is run on a processor 32 of the control system 30. The processor 32 forms part of a controller 34 which drives the screen 16 of the video display unit and which receives input signals from sensors 36. The sensors 36 are responsive to the actuator buttons 20.1 and 20.2 and also include touch screen sensors 36 mounted in the screen 16.

The controller 34 receives input pulses from a mechanism 38 indicating that a player has provided credit to begin playing. The mechanism 38 includes a coin input chute 38.1 (Figure 1) and a bill collector 38.2. If desired, the mechanism 38 could include instead, or in addition, a credit card reader (not shown), or any other type of validation device.

Finally, the controller 34 also drives a payout mechanism 40 which, for example, may be a coin hopper for feeding coins to the coin tray 26.

In use, the player wagers a bet via the mechanism 38. The player activates the base game of the machine 10 by operating one of each of the buttons 20.3 and 20.4.

The base game of the machine 10 is then played in the normal manner under the control of the processor 32. Any wins awarded to the player by the machine 10 are paid in the normal manner. Also, eligibility to participate in features associated with the base game, such as a free game series or second-screen animated feature, occur.

The machine 10 prompts the player, for example, via appropriate icons on the screen 16 to participate in the secondary event or feature. For the player to participate in such a secondary event or feature, a dedicated, separate bet or wager needs to be made by the player. This can be effected, once again, by applying credit to the machine via the mechanism 38. This may occur in response to prompts on the screen 16 to which the player responds via the touch screen. The secondary event may also be a spinning reel type of game. To activate the reels 18 on the screen 16 for the secondary event, the player operates the button 20.2.

When the player places a bet in respect of the secondary event, the total bet wagered in respect of the secondary event is added to a prize pool of

this improve a player's chances of winning increased prizes, but it increases the turnover for the venue by additional bets being wagered by the players.

Another major advantage of the invention is that players who are not eligible for the secondary event do not contribute to the prize pool for the
5 secondary event. For most existing progressive jackpot systems, players must bet the maximum bet to be eligible for the jackpot and those who do not do so still contribute a portion of their bet towards the progressive jackpot. Thus, the present invention provides a fairer system.

10 It will be appreciated by persons skilled in the art that numerous variations and/or modifications may be made to the invention as shown in the specific embodiments without departing from the spirit or scope of the invention as broadly described. The present embodiments are, therefore, to be considered in all respects as illustrative and not restrictive.

CLAIMS

1. A gaming machine which includes:
a display mean for displaying at least a base game;
a control means, including a processing means, for controlling
5 operation of the base game; and
a discriminating means for discriminating between wagers placed on
the game to determine whether the wager is to be placed in respect of the
base game or a secondary event.
2. The gaming machine of claim 1 in which the secondary event is
10 displayed on the display means.
3. The gaming machine of claim 1 or claim 2 in which the secondary
event is displayed on a display means remote from the gaming machine.
4. The gaming machine of any one of the preceding claims in which the
secondary event is controlled by the control means.
- 15 5. The gaming machine of any one of claims 1 to 3 inclusive, in which
the secondary event is controlled by a central controller with which the
gaming machine is in communication.
6. The gaming machine of any one of the preceding claims which
includes an allocating means for allocating an entire wager, placed in respect
20 of the secondary event, to a prize pool for the secondary event.
7. The gaming machine of claim 6 in which the allocating means operates
under the control of the control means.
8. The gaming machine of any one of the preceding claims in which the
discriminating means is activated by an actuator.
- 25 9. The gaming machine of claim 8 in which the actuator is a selector
button.
10. The gaming machine of claim 8 or claim 9 in which the actuator is in
the form of an icon on a touch screen of the gaming machine.
11. A gaming machine system which includes:
30 a gaming machine comprising a display means for displaying at least a
base game, a control means, including a processing means, for controlling
operation of the base game and any secondary event or feature and a
discriminating means for discriminating between wagers placed on the game
to determine whether the wager is to be placed in respect of the base game or
35 a secondary event; and

a dynamic prize pool associated with the gaming machine for awarding prizes for wins in respect of the secondary event, the dynamic prize pool being related to wagers placed in respect of the secondary event.

12. The system of claim 11 in which the secondary event is displayed on the display means.

13. The system of claim 11 or claim 12 in which the secondary event is displayed on a display means remote from the gaming machine.

14. The system of any one of claims 11 to 13 inclusive, in which the secondary event is controlled by the control means.

15. The system of any one of claims 11 to 13 inclusive, in which the secondary event is controlled by a central controller with which the gaming machine is in communication.

16. The system of any one of claims 11 to 15 inclusive, which includes an allocating means for allocating an entire wager, placed in respect of the secondary event, to the prize pool for the secondary event.

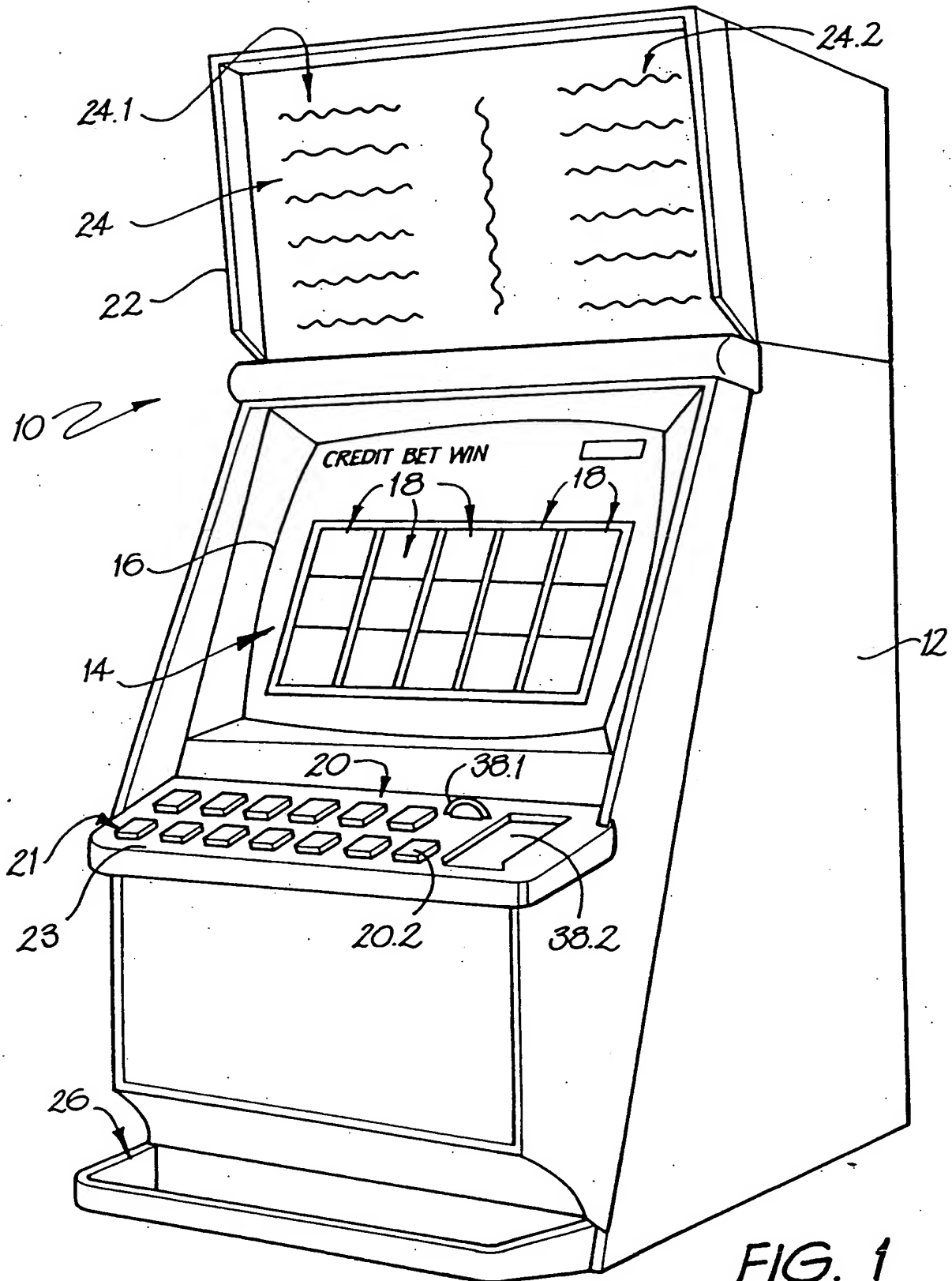
17. The system of claim 16 in which the allocating means operates under the control of the control means.

18. The system of any one of claims 11 to 17 inclusive, in which the discriminating means is activated by an actuator.

19. The system of claim 18 in which the actuator is a selector button.

20. The system of claim 18 or claim 19 in which the actuator is in the form of an icon on a touch screen of the gaming machine.

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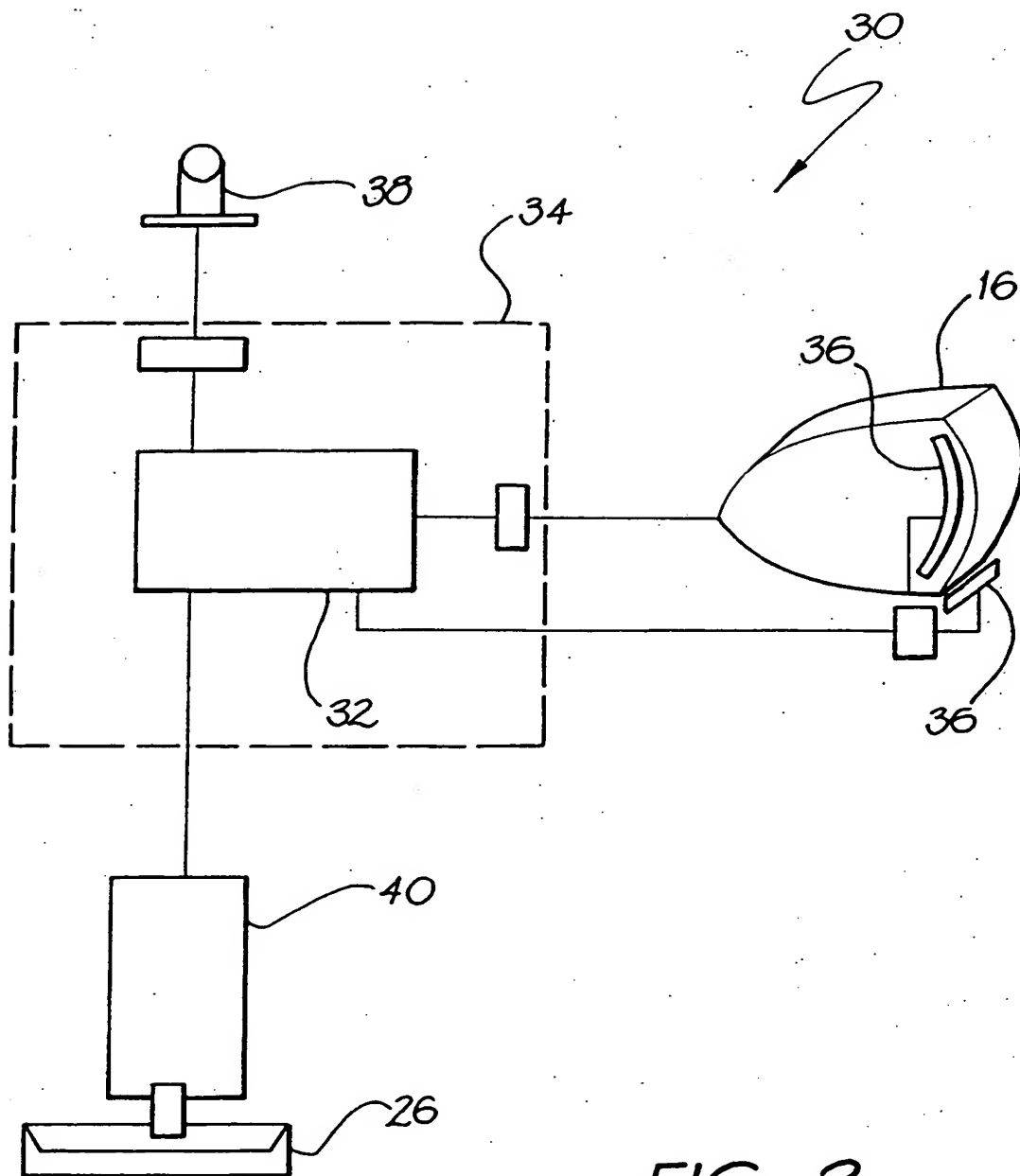


FIG. 2

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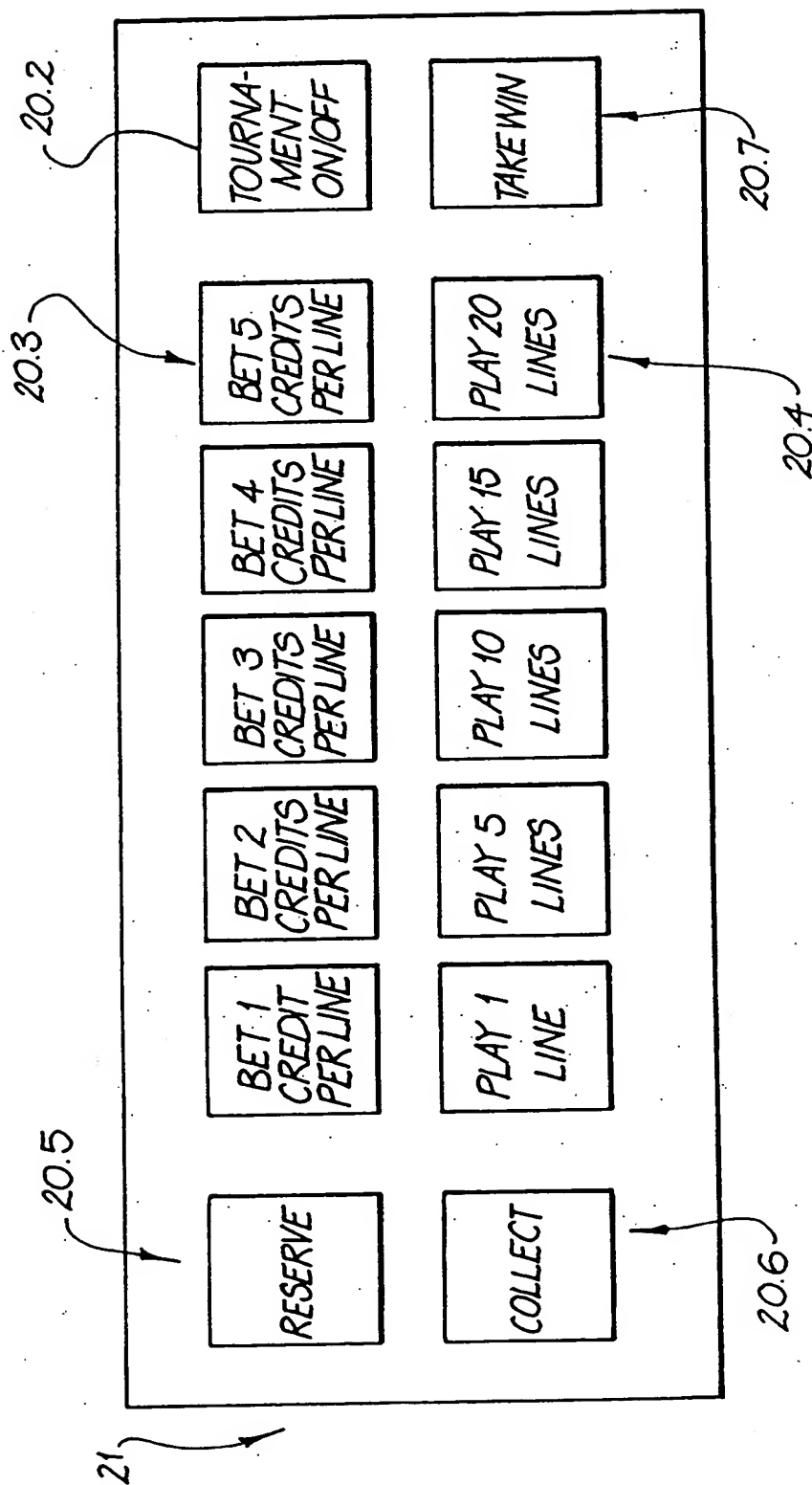


FIG. 3

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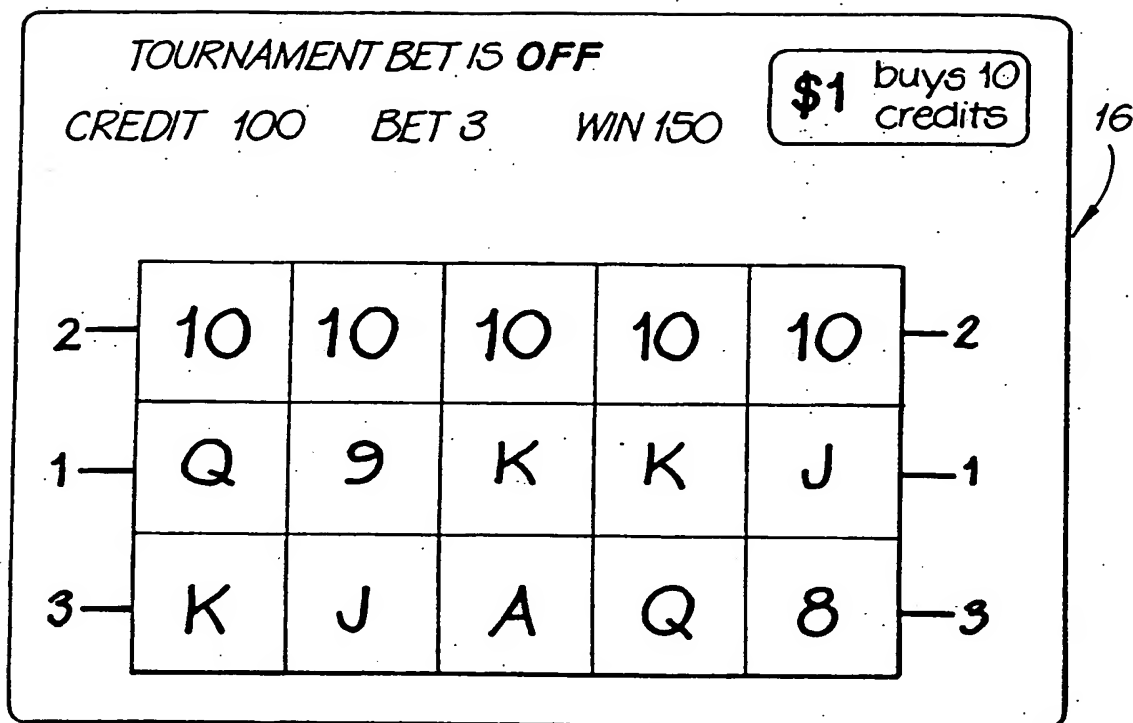


FIG. 4

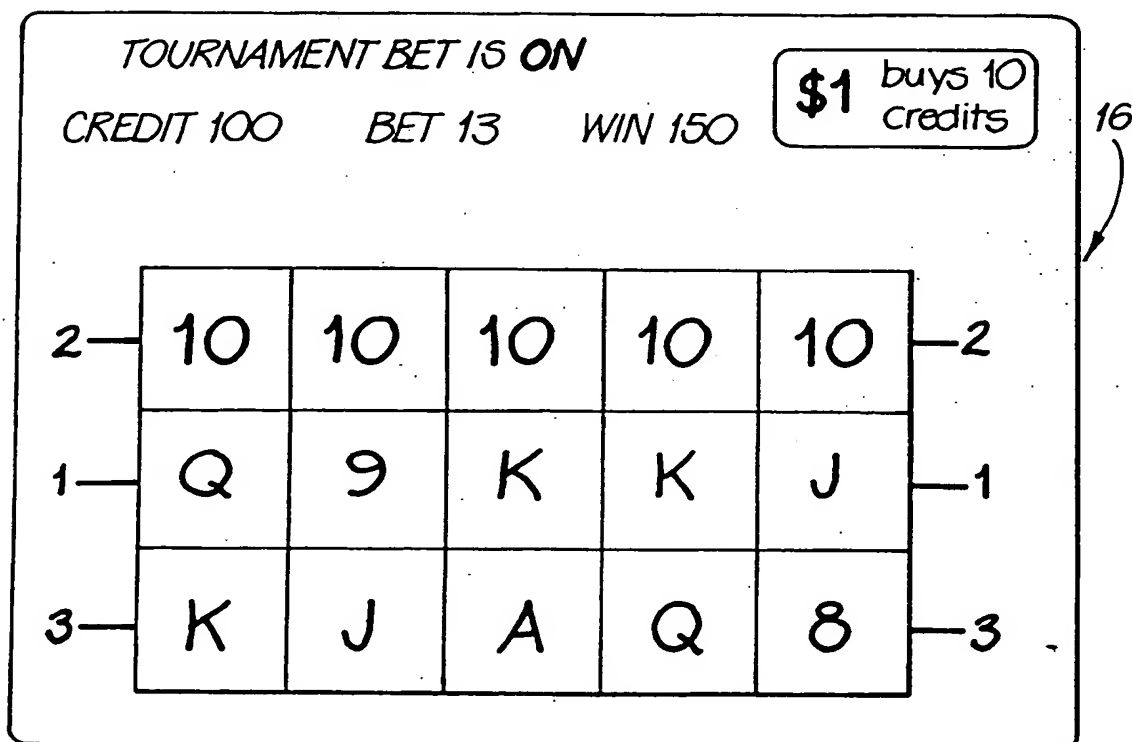


FIG. 5

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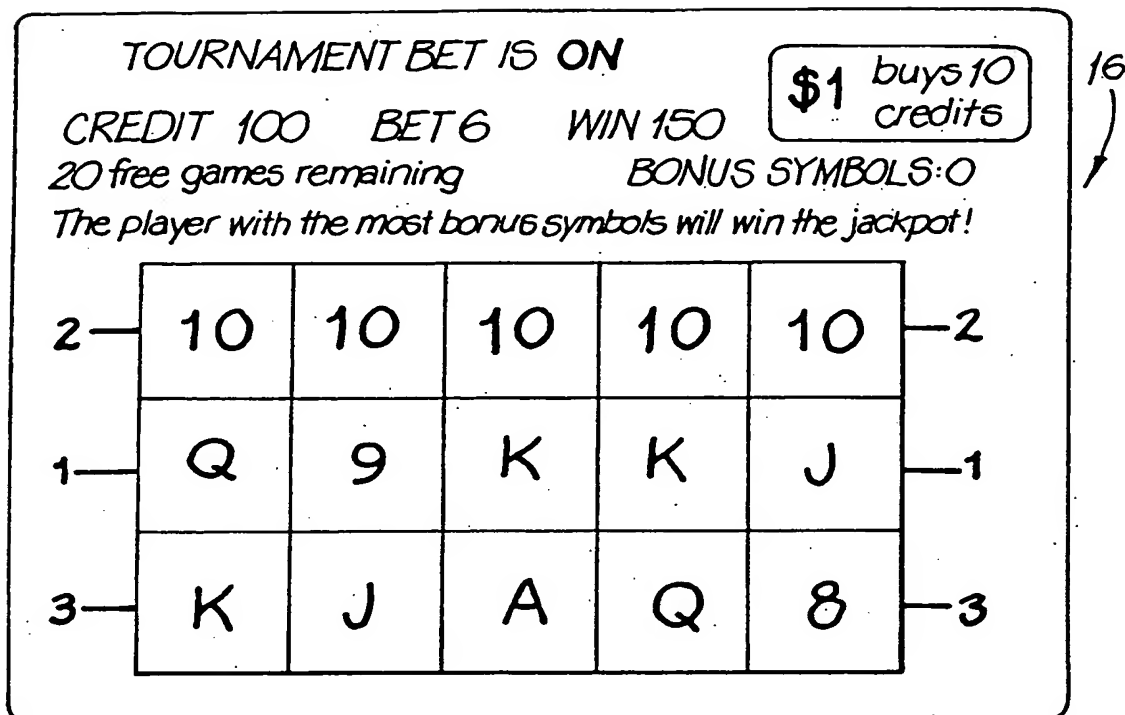


FIG. 6

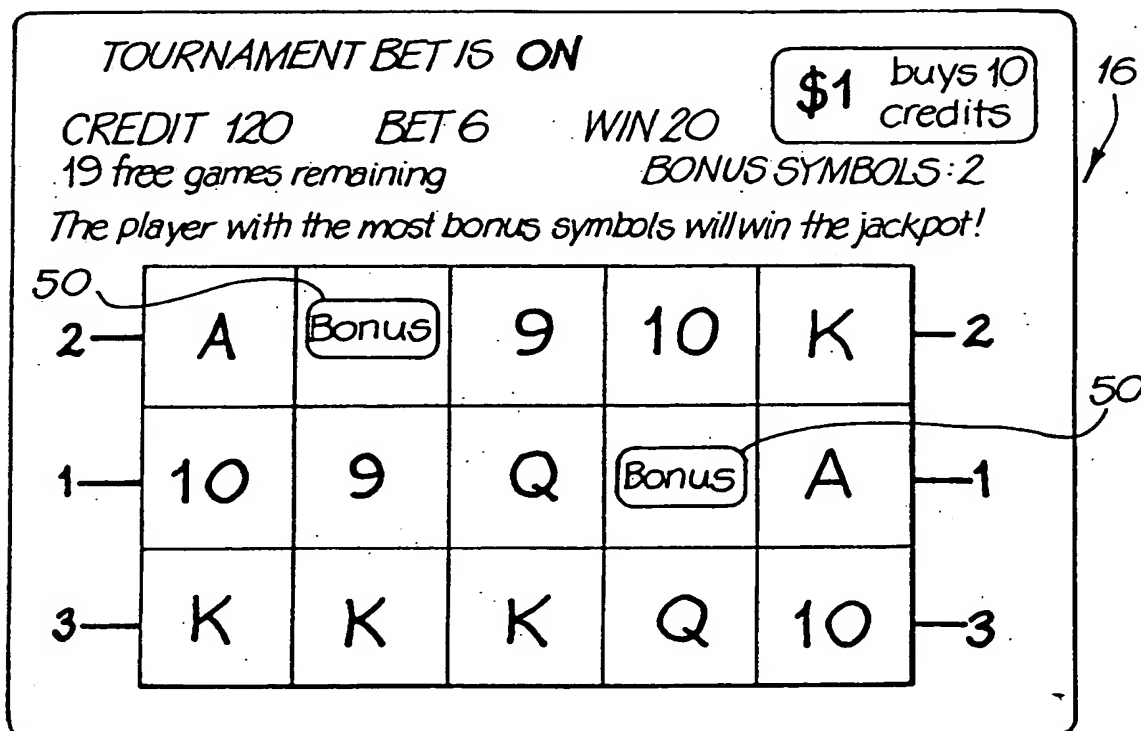


FIG. 7

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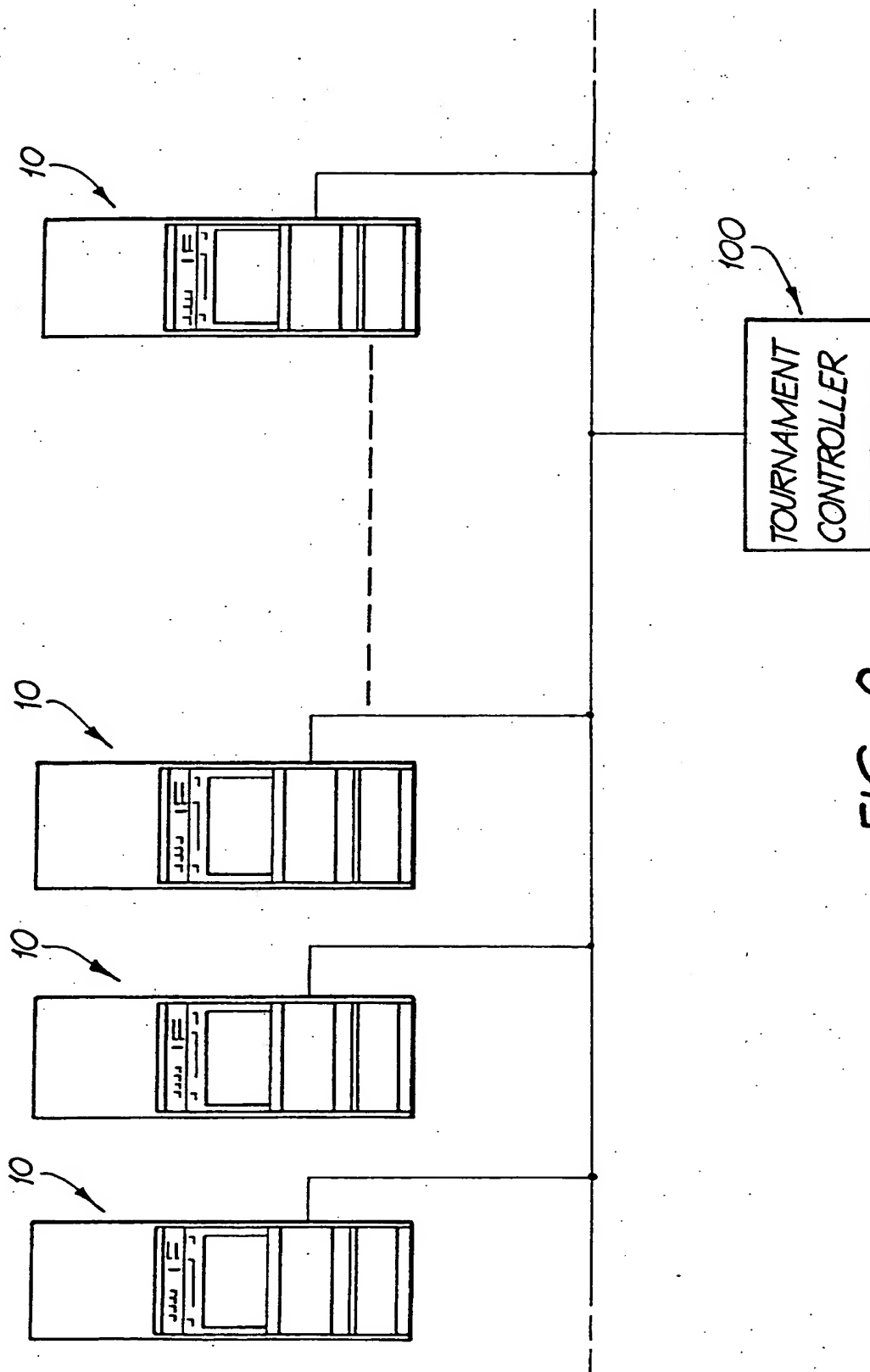


FIG. 8

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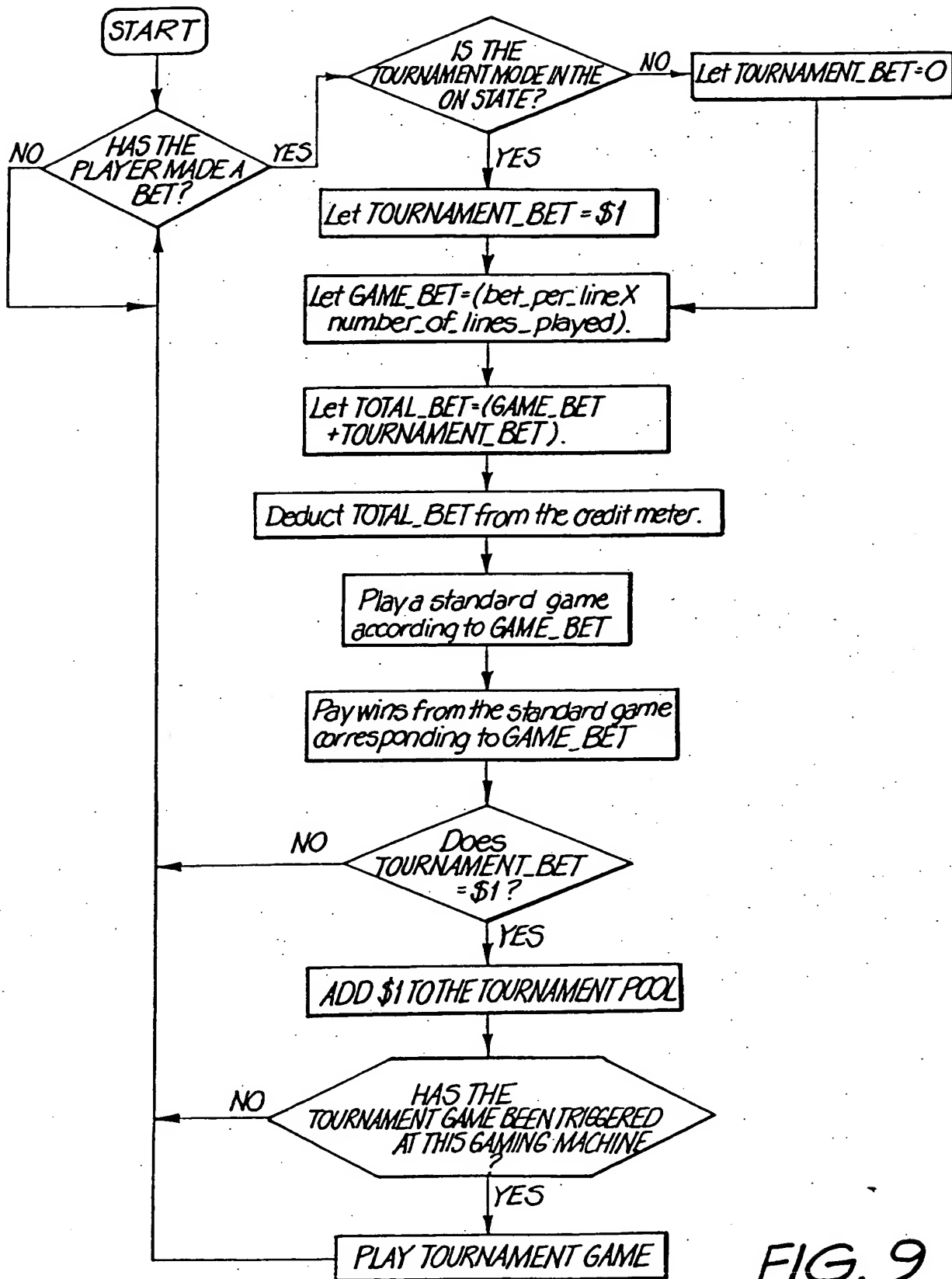


FIG. 9

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/AU00/01341

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTERInt. Cl. ⁷: G06F 19/00, 161:00, A63F 5/04, 13/00, G07F 17/34

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

WPAT, Esp@cenet, USPTO Web Patent Database, "slot machine, bonus game, side game etc"

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X Y	AU,A,70382/94(CREATIVE ARRANGEMENTS PTY LTD) 17 August 1995 Page 3 lines 5 to 13, page 4 lines 13 to 15 and page 5 lines 11 to 17 in particular. In combination with WO 99/10849 below.	1,3,5-9 2,4,10,11-20
X Y	WO,A,99/10849(ARISTOCRAT LEISURE INDUSTRIES PTY LTD) 4 March 1999 Page 4 lines 1 to 8, page 7 lines 7 to 25 and page 9 lines 21 to 27 In combination with AU 70382/94 above.	1,2,4-12,14-20 3,13

☐ Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C
 ☒ See patent family annex

* Special categories of cited documents:

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"X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone

"Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art

"&" document member of the same patent family

Date of the actual completion of the international search

27 November 2000

Date of mailing of the international search report

5 - DEC 2000

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT
Information on patent family members

International application No.
PCT/AU00/01341

This Annex lists the known "A" publication level patent family members relating to the patent documents cited in the above-mentioned international search report. The Australian Patent Office is in no way liable for these particulars which are merely given for the purpose of information.

Patent Document Cited in Search Report		Patent Family Member	
WO	99/10849	AU	87937/98
END OF ANNEX			